



## Request for Applications



RFA # 005-PDG-2021

**TITLE:** Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) Renewal Grant State-wide Birth to 3 Program Feasibility and Cost Study - Revised

**FUNDING AGENCY:** NC DHHS/Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE)

**ISSUE DATE:** August 16, 2021

**RECEIPT DEADLINE:** Applications, subject to the following conditions, must be received no later than **5:00 pm, September 30, 2021.**

**EMAIL** an electronic PDF of your application to the NC Division of Child Development and Early Education via this email: [DCDEE.PDGContracts.Unit.RFA@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:DCDEE.PDGContracts.Unit.RFA@dhhs.nc.gov).

The signature of an authorized official is required on the application face sheet. An electronic signature or an electronic scanned copy of the signed application face sheet will be accepted. **Only electronic application submissions via email will be accepted, i.e., do not mail, fax, or deliver copies of the application to DCDEE's physical or mailing address.**

**INTENT TO APPLY:** Eligible agencies and/or organizations interested in applying for this RFA are encouraged to notify DCDEE of their intent to apply via the following link, <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/XQKX3B5> no later than **5:00 pm, August 27, 2021.** Agencies are **not** required to notify of their intent to respond to this RFA; this information is requested to assist DCDEE in planning.

**BIDDER'S CONFERENCE:** DCDEE plans on hosting a Bidder's Conference for this RFA on **September 1, 2021, at 12:30 pm.** During this time an overview of the RFA will be presented along with an opportunity for Q&A.

[https://www.zoomgov.com/meeting/register/vJlsduygpj8qGPjH0H5jwW2HxCwc\\_AMfmjc](https://www.zoomgov.com/meeting/register/vJlsduygpj8qGPjH0H5jwW2HxCwc_AMfmjc)

**DIRECT ALL INQUIRIES** concerning this Request for Applications in writing to:

Tilneil Gary, PDG Grant Manager

Email address: [DCDEE.PDGContracts.Unit.RFA@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:DCDEE.PDGContracts.Unit.RFA@dhhs.nc.gov)

Sharon Johnson, PDG Contracts Manager

Email address: [DCDEE.PDGContracts.Unit.RFA@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:DCDEE.PDGContracts.Unit.RFA@dhhs.nc.gov)

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Questions concerning the specifications, or any information contained within this Request for Applications (RFA) must be received no later than **5:00 pm, August 30,**

**2021.** All questions must be received in writing, via electronic mail to: [DCDEE.PDGContracts.Unit.RFA@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:DCDEE.PDGContracts.Unit.RFA@dhhs.nc.gov). Responses to all questions received by the deadline will be posted on the Division of Child Development and Early Education website <https://ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov/Whats-New> no later than **5:00 pm, September 3, 2021.**

**ELIGIBILITY:** This RFA is open to state agencies and universities, public and private nonprofit organizations with a current 501(c)(3) standing with knowledge of North's Carolina's early childhood education mixed delivery system and expertise in conducting research and presenting data, providing consultation to state and local government agencies/personnel, and providing analysis of emerging conditions and child well-being.

**FUNDING AVAILABILITY:** A contract will be awarded from this RFA over an 18-month period of funding beginning with an estimated start date of January 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023. Up to \$1,000,000 may be available over the 18-month period depending on the availability of carry forward and continuation funds. Should a carry forward or no cost extension option be granted to DCDEE by the federal funder, the same option will be available to the contractor.

This RFA will fund development of a feasibility and cost study to establish a statewide companion program to NC Pre-K, that will serve low-income and at-risk children birth to age three.

DCDEE will determine the actual funding amount based on the proposed execution of the project and the utilization of funds as outlined in the successful applicant's proposal, pending funding availability.

**Preschool Development Grant B-5 Renewal Grant Funding Source:**

1. Funding Type	Discretionary
2. Federal Award Identification Number (FAIN)	90TP0056-02-00
3. Federal Award Date (see § 200.39 Federal award date)	12/03/2020
4. Total Amount of the Federal Award (awarded to DCDEE)	\$13,414,500
5. Federal award project description, as required to be responsive to the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA)	PDG B-5 Renewal Grants seek to empower state governments to lead the way in leveraging federal, state and local early care and education investments. Renewal grants will assist states in helping low-income and disadvantaged children to enter kindergarten prepared to succeed. In addition, these grants will help improve the transitions between early care and education settings and elementary school. The overall responsibility of the PDG B-5 Renewal Grant is to assist states in the coordination of existing early childhood funding streams, resulting in services being provided to more children birth through five in a mixed delivery system.

6. Name of Federal awarding agency, pass-through entity, and contact information for awarding official	US DHHS Administration for Children and Families Office of Child Care NC DHHS/DCDEE 333 Six Forks Road Raleigh, North Carolina 27609
7. CFDA Number and Name; the pass-through entity must identify the dollar amount made available under each Federal award and the CFDA number at the time of disbursement	CFDA# 93.434 ESSA Preschool Development Grants Birth Through Five
8. Identification of whether the award is R&D	No

**Preschool Development Grant B-5 Renewal Grant Funding Source:**

1. Funding Type	Discretionary
2. Federal Award Identification Number (FAIN)	2101NCCCDF
3. Federal Award Date (see § 200.39 Federal award date)	02/03/2021
4. Total Amount of the Federal Award (awarded to DCDEE)	\$133,621,971.00
5. Federal award project description, as required to be responsive to the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA)	Child Care Development Fund - To make grants to States and Tribes to assist low-income families with child care and to: (1) Allow each State maximum flexibility in developing child care programs and policies that best suit the needs of children and parents within State; (2) promote parental choice to empower working parents to make their own decisions on the child care that best suits their family's needs; (3) encourage States to provide consumer education information to help parents make informed choices about child care; (4) assist States to provide child care to parents trying to achieve independence from public assistance; and (5) assist States in implementing the health, safety, licensing, and registration standards established in State regulations
6. Name of Federal awarding agency, pass-through entity, and contact information for awarding official	Federal DHHS Office Administration for Children and Families NC DHHS/DCDEE 333 Six Forks Road Raleigh, North Carolina 27609
7. CFDA Number and Name; the pass-through entity must identify the dollar amount made available under each Federal award and the CFDA number at the time of disbursement	CFDA# 93.575 Child Care and Development Block Grant
8. Identification of whether the award is R&D	No

**Federal Requirements on indirect cost rates and calculations according to 2 C.F.R. 200.414:**

1. If your agency has or establishes a Federal Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate (FNIR), then the agency is not allowed to charge the “de minimis” rate of 10% (or some other amount) for indirect costs, as directed by 2 C.F.R. 200.414(f).
2. Agencies with an FNIR are required to charge their agreed upon rate for their indirect costs and include cost items as determined by the FNIR in their indirect costs.
3. If your agency does not have and never had a FNIR, then your agency is allowed to negotiate a different rate or the “de minimis,” as per 2 C.F.R. 200.414(f).
4. Negotiation of indirect cost rates in excess of the “de minimis” rate of 10% are performed by the NC DHHS Office of the Controller, Cost Analysis and Administration section:

Cost Analysis/Federal Financial Reporting/Administration  
DHHS Office of the Controller  
NC Department of Health and Human Services  
1050 Umstead Dr  
Raleigh, NC 27699-2019  
Phone: 919-855-3696

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Extensive research on early brain development has informed the understanding that investments in infants and toddlers are critical, especially for very young children with high needs. According to Dr. James J. Heckman’s work with a group of economists, psychologists, statisticians, and neuroscientists, “early childhood development directly influences economic, health and social outcomes for individuals and society. Adverse early environments create deficits in skills and abilities that drive down productivity and increase social costs – thereby adding to financial deficits borne by the public.”

North Carolina has been recognized for the high-quality NC Pre-K program which shows positive educational outcomes for North Carolina’s four-year-old children identified as at-risk. Annual evaluations of the NC Pre-K program have shown consistently positive child outcomes for children enrolled in the program as reflected by higher scores on third grade End of Grade tests than similar children who did not attend. Research shows that a higher level of quality and higher standards is necessary to achieve the kinds of educational outcomes exhibited in NC Pre K.

In 2018, NC DHHS developed a report on a separate star-rated license for birth through two years of age by the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services. A recommendation in this report was to conduct a feasibility and cost study for the development of a pilot program modeled after NC Pre-K for birth through age three classrooms.

## **II. BACKGROUND**

North Carolina has made substantial investments in a high-quality NC Pre-K program with proven positive outcomes for participating children and the experience to know that it takes time to develop a solid new program. Expanding access to high-quality infant-toddler care was a recommendation in North Carolina’s recent statewide B-5 Needs Assessment. State leaders are also interested in determining the feasibility of a large-scale high-quality early learning program for low-income and at-risk children birth through age three, similar to the NC Pre-K, which serves four-year-olds.

The landmark Leandro ruling reaffirmed North Carolina’s constitutional duty to ensure all children have the opportunity to receive a sound basic education. Subsequent rulings require North Carolina to identify specific resources needed to ensure that all children, including those who are at-risk or from rural and underserved communities, have access to a sound basic education, including access to early childhood education. Since the court issued the Leandro ruling in 1997 and the subsequent Hoke County Board of Education ruling in 2004, North Carolina has struggled to live up to this constitutional requirement.

The January 21, 2020, Leandro Consent Order and the subsequent June 15, 2020, Joint Report submitted to the court addresses the establishment of a system of early education that

provides access to high-quality prekindergarten and other early childhood learning opportunities. Included in the early childhood education priorities of the Leandro plan are action steps for North Carolina to “increase high-quality early learning opportunities for at-risk children from birth through age three,” including the implementation of a feasibility and cost study for a state model for high-quality early learning programs for birth through age three (comparable to the state model for high-quality NC Pre-K but appropriately designed for younger ages).

In December 2019, the Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE) was awarded funding through the [Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five](#) (PDG B-5) to implement activities to strengthen its early childhood education system. North Carolina is using the PDG renewal period to carefully develop a scalable program while developing actionable implementation plans and recommendations for a companion program to NC Pre-K. The companion program will be designed to provide a high-quality comprehensive child development and family support program to assist low-income and at-risk children birth through age three achieve measurable short, mid, and long -term positive child outcomes. The program model will also be designed to prioritize infants and toddlers most at-risk for negative impacts of social determinants of health, Adverse Childhood Experiences, and for lower school readiness outcomes. The model will also address systemic barriers to accessing culturally responsive early care and education by developing equitable eligibility requirements, site qualifications and requirements, classroom environment and program requirements, teacher qualifications and compensation, and program evaluation and monitoring protocols. The model will include a governance structure that encompasses the infant and toddler and NC Pre-K programs to ensure continuity of care and alignment of services within communities.

DCDEE is seeking an entity that will:

1. Conduct a literature review to identify proven elements of high-quality birth through three Infant-Toddler to Preschool and Preschool to Pre-K care and education services.
2. Identify any statewide or scaled programs currently available in the United States that support the transition of children as they age out of services including Infant-Toddler to Preschool and Preschool to Pre-K program.
3. Review data on the current quality of and access to infant-toddler care in NC.
4. Determine the most impactful level of educator preparation for infant and toddler care and education drawing from the National Association for the Education of Young Children’s Power to the Profession Unifying Framework and competencies of North Carolina community colleges and universities.

5. Determine successful mixed delivery system and mixed classroom conditions needed for successful implementation.
6. Develop an operational transition plan for children and families as they move from this program to other early care and education settings.
7. Develop a cost model and proposed phased financing approach utilizing state and federal resources.
8. Establish a state Infant-Toddler Advisory Council to help guide the work, consisting of program owners and operators, infant and toddler educators, representatives of families with infants and toddlers, researchers, and other early childhood and financing experts.
9. Develop a governance structure for the infant and toddler program, and NC Pre-K program including action steps for preparing the existing NC Pre-K governance structure to include the infant and toddler program.
10. Develop legislative briefing and research materials to engage North Carolina legislators in understanding the importance of birth to age three development and reviewing and providing input on the study results.

Resources: An applicant may find the following resources linked below (and/or included as an attachment to this RFA) helpful in preparing a successful application narrative.

- The [PDG B-5 Renewal Grant Application](#), outlining planned projects for each of the six required activities, including Activity 5.2 Infant-Toddler Feasibility and Cost Study.
- The [PDG B-5 Needs Assessment](#).
- The [PDG B-5 Strategic Plan](#).
- The [North Carolina Early Childhood Action Plan](#).
- The WestEd Leandro report "[Sound Basic Education for All: An Action Plan for North Carolina](#)."
- The January 21, 2020 Leandro Consent Order and the June 15, 2020 "Joint Report to the Court on Sound Basic Education for All: Fiscal Year 2021 Action Plan for North Carolina," have been included as an attachment.
- The Leandro 2021 – 2028 [Comprehensive Remedial Plan](#).
- The National Association for the Education of Young Children's [Power to the Profession Unifying Framework](#).



- The 2020 - 2021 [North Carolina Pre-K Program Requirements and Guidance Manual](#)
- NC Pre-K legislation reports, executive orders and plans including: [Study Costs and Effectiveness Associated with NC Pre-K Slots](#), [NC Pre-K Executive Order 100](#), and [NC Pre-K Compliance Plan in Accordance with Executive Order 100](#).

### **III. SCOPE OF SERVICES**

North Carolina proposes to conduct a study of the feasibility and costs for the development and initiation of a program designed to provide high-quality comprehensive child development and family support program to low-income at-risk children birth through age three and their families. The program will align with NC PreK and would ensure children have a seamless birth through kindergarten early learning experience. The program model must use an equity lens to address child enrollment eligibility, site qualifications and requirements, classroom environment and program requirements, blended funding classrooms including private pay, teacher qualifications and commensurate compensation, family engagement, and program evaluation/monitoring.

#### **Program/Policy Study**

The successful applicant will develop a plan to conduct a study of current literature on best practices for infant/toddler care, to connect and analyze data on the infant/toddler care being provided in North Carolina, and to gain an understanding of the need for infant/toddler care or lack thereof in North Carolina. Data gathered during the study period must be synthesized and presented to the Division prior to moving forward to designing the program.

- A. Collect and analyze current literature and data on the following:
  1. Literature that identifies proven elements of high-quality early care and education for birth through age three such as: governance structure, use of a curriculum, child to teacher ratios, teacher preparatory education, teacher in-service professional development, family engagement, culturally competent caregiving practices, program standards, cost of high-quality care, program, classroom, and teacher assessment tools and developmental screening.
  2. Research of current birth through three programs in the United States to identify program elements that have been successfully implemented at scale.
  3. Previously or currently existing programs.
- B. Synthesize existing, and if needed, collect additional data on the current quality of infant-toddler care in North Carolina to include:
  1. Structural features of care including group size and ratio, caregiver qualifications and professional development, physical environment, schedules and routines, health safety and nutrition.
  2. Caregiver-child interactions (including sensitivity and responsiveness, language and cognitive stimulation, positive regard/ warmth, behavior guidance, support

- for peer interactions and observed negative behaviors of detachment, intrusiveness, and negative regard).
- 3. Other aspects of quality (including caregiver-parent communication, child-peer relationships, and contextual factors, such as auspice, program performance standards, and community resources).
- 4. Suspension and expulsion practices/policies/occurrences for infants/toddlers.
- 5. Infant/toddler child care subsidy enrollment by race, ethnicity, program type, and region.
- 6. Examining infant toddler child care capacity versus enrollment.
- 7. Geo-mapping areas where licensed child care options are not available or overcrowded.
- C. Conduct a market survey to determine the demand for infant-toddler care by:
  - a. Examining wait lists across the state from the county departments of social services, Child Care Resource and Referral, and local Smart Start Partnerships.
  - b. Surveying centers across the state to determine wait lists for private centers.
  - c. Determining the number of children ages birth-three that are homeless or living in poverty.
  - d. Current Census data.
  - e. Any other data sources that determine the need for infant-toddler care.
- D. Summarize findings from program/policy study in a report including a description of the elements of high-quality birth-3 care, the status of infant-toddler quality in North Carolina.
  - a. Summary must be presented in a report to include an executive summary. The executive summary shall provide a high-level synthesis of the findings and recommendations that could be used for conversations with broader stakeholder audiences including agency leadership, policymakers, and funders.
  - b. A slide deck of study results must be created for Division of Child Development and Early Education use.

### **Program Design**

The successful applicant will develop a design including program elements and child/teacher outcomes. The applicant shall also address cost models for supporting the program.

- A. Design program requirements and guidance for a program based on the quality measures identified in the program/policy study.
  - 1. Identify a suggested program structure included but not limited to:
    - i. Child care program requirements,
    - ii. Teacher requirements,
    - iii. Child eligibility,
    - iv. Length of day,
    - v. Nutrition requirements, and
    - vi. Diversity, equity, and inclusion standards,
    - vii. Local and state governance structures that incorporate NC Pre-K.

2. Identify suggested program standards:
  - i. Usage of developmental screening tools,
  - ii. Creating inclusive settings,
  - iii. Family engagement opportunities,
  - iv. Supporting transportation needs, and
  - v. Required professional development.
- B. Develop two - three alternative cost models for the program design. Identify the cost associated with delivering a full day (at least 8 hours) of care to children birth-3 based on the program design.
- C. Create a slide deck of a summary of the program standards and requirements, governance, and cost models for Division of Child Development and Early Education use.

### **Infant-Toddler Advisory Council**

The purpose of the Infant-toddler Advisory Council is to provide ongoing, collaborative advice about policies and procedures in the design of services. The successful applicant will devise a plan to establish and convene an Infant-Toddler Advisory Council.

- A. Establish a state-level Infant-Toddler Advisory Council which shall be responsible for providing feedback to the Contractor on critical decision points, including program requirements and other guidance as needed.
  - a. Ensure that the Infant-Toddler Advisory Council consists of researchers, health/mental health practitioners, early childhood teachers and administrators, families, financing experts, and other stakeholders.
  - b. Create a list of suggested members with an explanation of why they were chosen.
  - c. Support for family representation should be reflecting in the budget.
  - d. Submit letters of support. A letter of support from the family representative may be omitted.
- B. Facilitate regular Infant-Toddler Advisory Council meetings.
  - a. Provide details on proposed meeting frequency and the plan for engaging this Council.

### **Evaluation and Monitoring:**

The successful applicant shall create a system for evaluating and monitoring the program they have developed. The methods shall include but not be limited to:

- A. Screening and Assessment Tools,
- B. Curriculum usage/fidelity and alignment to the [NC Foundations for Early Learning & Development](#),
- C. Monitoring of teacher practices (tools such as the [Infant-Toddler CLASS](#)),
- D. Monitoring/Evaluating requirements for ongoing classroom quality,
- E. Reporting and monitoring suspension/expulsion occurrences in participating child care programs,
- F. Programmatic and fiscal monitoring of programs on a local level,

- G. Compliance with DCDEE licensing requirements,
- H. Compliance with programmatic requirements and standards,
- I. Monitoring and evaluating child, teacher, and family outcomes, and
- J. Compliance with diversity, equity, and inclusion standards.

**Suggested Timeline of Outputs:**

<b>February 2022</b>	<b>Establish the Infant-Toddler Advisory Council</b>
<b>September 2022</b>	<b>Submission of Program/Policy Study Report</b>
<b>May/June 2023</b>	<b>Submission of the Program Design</b>
<b>May/June 2023</b>	<b>Submission of the Evaluation and Monitoring Tools</b>

**IV. ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS**

1. **Reports** – Provide data as requested by Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE) to meet federal reporting requirements and as needed for the state’s B-5 Needs Assessment, B-5 Strategic Plan, and/or PDG Program Performance Evaluation. This includes submitting monthly, quarterly, and annual reporting by the deadlines provided by DCDEE in order to meet any submission date required from the federal funder.
2. **Feedback** – Providing feedback at least monthly to DCDEE is required throughout the duration of the grant to contribute to continuous quality improvement and monitor ongoing processes and the progress towards the goals and objectives of the project.

**V. APPLICANT QUALIFICATIONS AND CAPACITY**

Applicants must exhibit comprehensive knowledge of early childhood education (ECE) systems, effective policies and practices at all levels of the ECE infrastructure, a demonstrated ability to develop and execute equity-focused projects, and program design and evaluation expertise. Applicants must be able to work effectively with a variety of ECE stakeholders, including state and local agencies. Preference will be given to applicants with extensive knowledge of the North Carolina Early Childhood Action Plan (ECAP) and recent developments in Leandro vs. State of North Carolina case addressing early childhood education, such as the WestEd Leandro report, the Governor’s Commission on Access to Sound Basic Education recommendations, the January 21, 2020 Consent Order and the June 15, 2020 Joint Report. The submission of work products that demonstrate similar or relevant efforts are required.

**VI. LINE-ITEM BUDGET & NARRATIVE**

The applicant will submit two line-item budgets—one for the work the applicant anticipates completing during the period of January 1, 2022 - December 31, 2022, and one for work the

applicant anticipates completing during the period of January 1, 2023 - June 30, 2023. The budgets must address the cost to complete deliverables outlined in this RFA. A narrative justification must be included for every expense listed in the budgets. Each justification should show how the amount on the line-item budget was calculated, and it should be clear how the expense relates to the project's activities. The total for the two budgets added together may not exceed \$1,000,000.

### **Travel Reimbursement Rates**

Mileage reimbursement rates must be based on rates determined by the North Carolina Office of State Budget and Management (OSBM). Because mileage rates fluctuate with the price of fuel, the OSBM will release the "Change in IRS Mileage Rate" memorandum to be found on OSBM's website when there is a change in this rate.

For other travel related expenses, please refer to the current rates for travel and lodging reimbursement presented in the chart below. However, please be advised that reimbursement rates periodically change. DCDEE will only reimburse for rates authorized in OSBM's North Carolina Budget Manual or adopted by means of an OSBM Budget Memo. These documents are located here: [https://www.osbm.nc.gov/budman5-travel-policies#TP5\\_1](https://www.osbm.nc.gov/budman5-travel-policies#TP5_1).

### **Current Rates for Travel and Lodging**

<b>Meals</b>	<b>In State</b>	<b>Out of State</b>
Breakfast	\$9.00	\$9.00
Lunch	\$11.80	\$11.80
Dinner	\$20.50	\$23.30
<b>Lodging</b> ( <i>Maximum rate per person, excludes taxes and fees</i> )	\$78.90	\$93.20
<b>Total Travel Allowance Per Day</b>	<b>\$120.20</b>	<b>\$137.30</b>
Mileage	\$0.56 cents per mile	

## **VII. APPLICATION CONTENT & FORMAT**

The submitted electronic application must be formatted to print on 8.5 x 11-inch paper with margins of 1 inch, except for the spreadsheets used in the budget template. Line spacing should be single-spaced. Use Calibri or Times New Roman font **only** no smaller than an 11-point font. All proposals must include the following (**\* indicates form included in RFA posting**).

- 1) **Application Checklist**\*: Summarizes the application components to be submitted.
- 2) **Application Face Sheet**\*: Requires electronic or scanned signature of authorized authority.

- 3) **Proposal Summary:** Provides a brief (3-5 paragraphs) description of the activities the applicant proposes to implement.
- 4) **Introduction to the Applicant Organization/Applicant Qualifications:** Provides a 1-3-page introduction to the applicant's organization, including:
  - The organization's mission, history, and goals.
  - Qualifications, experience, and expertise of key personnel to be assigned to this initiative including up to three work samples.
  - The organization's experience in the content area specified in the application.
- 5) **Proposal Design, Timeline & Strategies:** Provide a 5-7-page narrative describing the proposed project design and the activities/tasks as described in Section III that will be accomplished with the available resources. Include as part of the scope of services the major tasks, deliverables, and anticipated dates of completion. Identify the key personnel responsible for each task by position.
- 6) **Collaborative Partners or Subcontractors:** Provide a 1-3-page narrative describing any collaborative partners or subcontractors the applicant plans to work with in the development of a feasibility and cost study. Include partner or subcontractor name, address, and nonprofit or for-profit status. Explain the contributions each partner or subcontractor will make toward this project including resources. Attach copies of support letters from collaborative partners or subcontractors, if applicable. Requested attachments will not count toward the applicant's page limitations.
- 7) **Line-Item Budget\*, Detailed Budget Narrative, and FTE Sheet\*:** Complete and submit two proposed line-item budgets according to the format provided with this RFA. The budgets shall reflect the funding needed for the period of January 1, 2022 - December 31, 2022, and January 1, 2023 - June 30, 2023, and when added together do not exceed the total \$1,000,000 budget. Also complete a proposed budget narrative that explains in detail all line items in the budget worksheet in accordance with the "DCDEE Line-Item Budget & Narrative Instructions." The FTE worksheet is also required as part of this RFA. Please complete the FTE sheet first so that the line-item budget will populate Salary/Fringe values in Column C.

## **VIII. SELECTION PROCESS**

The following is a general description of the process for selecting applications for funding for this initiative. A selection committee chosen by DCDEE will review each application submitted. Upon review of each application, the selection committee will assign a numerical rating based on the following:

- 1) **Proposal Summary** (Maximum of **10** points):  
Response must reflect the applicant's understanding of and responsiveness to the Scope of Services described in Section III.
- 2) **Applicant Organization(s)/Applicant Qualifications/Partners** (Maximum of **20** points):  
Response must reflect the applicant's history of and capacity for successful completion of developing equity-focused plans and program design, as well as demonstrated expertise of North Carolina's early childhood education (ECE) mixed delivery system and ability to work effectively with a variety of ECE stakeholders. Collaborative partners or subcontractors, if used, should be qualified and have the capacity to provide the services specified.
- 3) **Proposal Design, Timeline & Strategies** (Maximum of **30** points):  
Response must reflect how the proposal will allow for the successful development of a scalable program featuring actionable implementation plans and recommendations (as a companion program to NC Pre-K) designed to provide a high-quality comprehensive child development and family support program to assist low-income and at-risk children birth through age three achieve measurable short, mid, and long -term positive child outcomes. The criteria in Section III must be addressed. Include a timeline of deliverables for the timeframe of January 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023. The timelines should reflect the activities and strategies that will support completion of an equitable infant toddler early care and education model.
- 4) **Alignment with Year 1 PDG work and Current NC Early Childhood studies:** (Maximum of **15** points):  
Plan must reflect how the project will align with North Carolina's PDG B-5 Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan completed in the initial phase of the planning grant, the North Carolina Early Childhood Action Plan (ECAP), and the Leandro early childhood education priorities. For more information on how to access these documents, see this list of resources outlined in Section II "Background" of this RFA.
- 5) **Commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion:** (Maximum of **10** points):  
Recognizing child outcomes vary disproportionately across race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, physical and developmental ability, and geography, the proposal must clearly demonstrate the applicant's ability to design and implement culturally responsive programming. The services provided by this contract (as well evidence of past work) shall include a focus of employing a diversity, equity and inclusion framework in project development and execution – to ensure the program that is developed is representative of and responsive to diverse identities of North Carolina families.
- 6) **Line-Item Budget\*, Detailed Budget Narrative and FTE Sheet\*:** (Maximum of **15** points):  
Budgets must reflect efficient and effective use of financial resources. The proposal must follow all stipulations included in the budget worksheet and narrative instructions. The plan must provide a clear and reasonable justification for all proposed expenditures. Two budgets must be provided to show the funding needed for the period of January 1, 2022

- December 31, 2022, and January 1, 2023 - June 30, 2023. Should a no cost extension be granted to DCDEE by the federal funder to complete PDG activities, the same option will be available to the contractor.

**Maximum Points: 100**

Any attachments must further demonstrate the applicant's capacity to fulfill the requirements for this project as described. Attachments will not count against the applicant's page limitations. The selection committee will submit recommendations to DCDEE based on the selection process described. The Division of Child Development and Early Education will make a final selection and notify all applicants of that selection in writing and/or electronically no later than 5:00 pm on October 8, 2021.

**IX. APPLICATION PROCUREMENT PROCESS**

1. Written questions concerning the RFA specifications will be received until the date specified on the cover sheet. A summary of all questions and answers will be posted to DCDEE's website (<http://ncchildcare.nc.gov/>) by August 30, 2021.
2. **An electronic submission** of the application must be received from each agency or organization. The submission must include an application face sheet with an electronic or scanned signature by an official authorized to bind the agency or organization in a legal contract.
3. All applications must be received by DCDEE via email not later than the date and time specified on the cover sheet of the RFA. **Paper copies or faxed applications will not be accepted.**
4. The date and time of application receipt will be documented by the date and time shown on the email submission received via [DCDEE.PDGContracts.Unit.RFA@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:DCDEE.PDGContracts.Unit.RFA@dhhs.nc.gov). Budgets and budget narratives are to be included as part of the application submitted.
5. At its option, the RFA evaluation team may request additional information from any or all applicants for clarification or to support the materials presented in any part of the application. However, agencies and organizations are cautioned that the evaluation team is not required to request clarification; therefore, all applications should be complete and reflect the most favorable terms available from the agency or organization.
6. Applications will be evaluated according to completeness, content, and applicant's documented experience with similar projects, apparent ability of the agencies or organization's staff and cost. The award of a grant to one agency and organization does not mean that the other applications lacked merit but that, all facts considered, the selected application was deemed to provide the best service to the State.



7. Agencies and organizations are cautioned that this is a request for applications, and the funding agency reserves the unqualified right to reject any and all applications when such rejections are deemed to be in the best interest of the funding agency.
8. **Application Process Summary Dates**
  - 08/16/2021: Request for Applications issued.
  - 08/27/2021: Interested applications submit **optional** Notice of Intent no later than 5 pm.
  - 08/30/2021: All questions due via email no later than 5 pm.
  - 09/01/2021: Bidder's Conference **optional** 12:30 – 2:00 pm
  - 09/03/2021: Answers to questions posted to the DCDEE website no later than 5 pm.
  - 09/30/2020: Applications must be received via email no later than 5 pm.
  - 10/08/2021: Successful applicant will be notified.
  - 01/01/2022: Estimated contract start date.

**X. GENERAL INFORMATION ON SUBMITTING APPLICATIONS**

1. **Award or Rejection**

All complete and timely submitted applications will be evaluated and awards will be made to that agencies or organizations whose combination of budget and service capabilities are deemed to be in the best interest of the funding agency. The funding agency reserves the unqualified right to reject any or all offers if determined to be in its best interest. The successful applicant will be notified by October 8, 2021.
2. **Cost of Application Preparation**

Any cost incurred by an agency or organization in preparing or submitting an application is the agency or organization's sole responsibility; the funding agency will not reimburse any agency or organization for any pre-award costs incurred.
3. **Elaborate Applications**

Elaborate applications in the form of brochures or other presentations beyond what is necessary to present a complete and effective application are not desired.
4. **Oral Explanations**

The funding agency will not be bound by oral explanations or instructions given at any time during the competitive process or after awarding the grant.
5. **Reference to Other Data**

Only information that is received in response to this RFA will be evaluated; reference to information previously submitted will not be considered.
6. **Titles**

Titles and headings in this RFA are for convenience only and shall have no binding force or effect.

**7. Form of Application**

Each application must be submitted utilizing the forms provided by DCDEE, and upon award, these forms will be incorporated into the funding agency's Performance Agreement (contract).

**8. Exceptions**

All applications are subject to the terms and conditions outlined herein. All responses will be controlled by such terms and conditions. The attachment of other terms and conditions by any agency or organization may be grounds for rejection of that agency or organization's application.

**9. Advertising**

In submitting its application, agencies and organizations agree not to use the results of the selection process as part of any news release or commercial advertising without prior written approval of DCDEE.

**10. Right to Submitted Material**

All responses, inquiries, or correspondence relating to or in reference to the RFA, and all other reports, charts, displays, schedules, exhibits, and other documentation submitted by the agency or organization will become the property of the funding agency when received.

**11. Competitive Offer**

Pursuant to the provision of N.C.G.S. 143-54, and under penalty of perjury, the signer of any application submitted in response to this RFA thereby certifies that this application has not been arrived at collusively or otherwise in violation of either Federal or North Carolina antitrust laws.

**12. Agency and Organization's Representative**

Each agency or organization shall submit with its application the name, address, and telephone number of the person(s) with authority to bind the agency or organization and answer questions regarding the application.

**13. Subcontracting**

Agencies and organizations may propose to subcontract portions of work provided that their applications clearly indicate the scope of the work to be subcontracted, and to whom.

**14. Proprietary Information**

Trade secrets or similar proprietary data which the agency or organization does not wish disclosed to other than personnel involved in the evaluation will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by NCAC TO1: 05B.1501 and G.S. 132-1.3 if identified as follows: Each page shall be identified in boldface at the top and bottom as "CONFIDENTIAL." Any section of the application that is to remain confidential shall also be so marked in boldface on the title page of that section.

**15. Participation Encouraged**

Pursuant to Article 3 and 3C, Chapter 143 of the North Carolina General Statutes and Executive Order No. 77, the funding agency invites and encourages participation in this RFA by businesses owned by minorities, women and the disabled including utilization as subcontractor(s) to perform functions under this Request for Applications.

**16. Gifts Ban**

N.C.G.S. 133-32 and Executive Order 24 prohibit the offer to or acceptance by any State Employee of any gift from anyone with a contract with the State, or from any person seeking to do business with the State. By execution of any response to this request, agencies and organizations attest, for the entire organization and its employees or agents, that no such gift has been offered, accepted, or promised by any employees of the organization.

**17. Contract/Funds Disbursement**

DCDEE will issue a contract to the recipients of the grant that will include their application. Expenditures may begin upon receipt of a fully executed contract and not before that point. To receive compensation, following contract submission and agreement, the selected applicants must submit a monthly reimbursement request to the Division for all expenses incurred.

**18. Audit**

Please be advised that successful applicants may be required to have an audit in accordance with N.C.G.S. 143C-6-22 and N.C.G.S. 143C-6-23 as applicable to the agency's status.

There are 3 reporting levels which are determined by the total direct grant receipts from all State agencies in the entity's fiscal year:

Level 1: Less than \$25,000

Level 2: At least \$25,000 but less than \$500,000

Level 3: \$500,000 or more. Level 3 grantees are required to submit a "Yellow Book" audit done by a CPA.

Only Level 3 grantees may include audit expenses on the budget. Audit expenses should be prorated based on the ratio of the grant to the total pass-through funds received by the entity.

**19. Additional Documentation to Include with Application**

All applicants are required to include documentation of their tax identification number. Those applicants which are private nonprofit agencies are to include a copy of an IRS determination letter regarding the agency's 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. (This letter normally includes the agency's tax identification number, so it would also satisfy that documentation requirement.)

## **20. Federal Certifications**

Agencies or organizations receiving federal funds are required to execute Federal certifications regarding non-discrimination, Drug-Free Workplace, Environmental Tobacco Smoke, Debarment, Lobbying, and Lobbying Activities.

## **21. System for Award Management Database (SAM)**

All grantees receiving federal funds must be actively registered in the federal government's System for Award Management (SAM) database or be willing to complete the registration process in conjunction with the award (see [www.sam.gov](http://www.sam.gov)). To maintain an active SAM record, the record must be updated no less than annually.

## **22. Additional Documentation Prior to Contract Execution**

Contracts will require additional documentation prior to contract execution. After the award announcement, agencies will be contacted about providing the following documentation:

- a. A completed and signed letter from the agency's Board President/Chairperson identifying individuals authorized to sign contracts.
- b. A completed and signed letter from the agency's Board President/Chairperson identifying individuals authorized to sign expenditure reports.
- c. Documentation of the agency's DUNS number. Documentation consists of a copy of communication (such as a letter or email correspondence) from Dun & Bradstreet (D&B) which indicates the agency or organization's legal name, address, and DUNS number. In lieu of a document from D&B, a copy of the agency or organization's SAM record is acceptable.
- d. If your agency does not have a DUNS number, please use the D&B online registration (<http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>) to receive one free of charge. (DUNS is the acronym for the Data Universal Numbering System developed and regulated by D&B.)
- e. Contracts with private non-profit agencies require additional documentation prior to contract execution. After the award announcement, private non-profit agencies will be contacted about providing the following documentation:
  - i. A completed, signed, and notarized statement which includes the agency's Conflict of Interest Policy.
  - ii. A completed, signed, and notarized page certifying that the agency has no overdue tax debts.
- f. All grantees receiving funds through the State of North Carolina are required to execute Contractor Certifications Required by North Carolina Law. Contractor Certifications should **NOT** be generated, signed or returned with application.

**Note:** At the start of each calendar year, all agencies with current DCDEE contracts are required to update their contract documentation. These agencies will be contacted a few weeks prior to the due date and will be provided the necessary forms and instructions.

**23. Registration with Secretary of State**

Private non-profit applicants must also be registered with the North Carolina Secretary of State to do business in North Carolina or be willing to complete the registration process in conjunction with the execution of the contract documents. (See [www.secretary.state.nc.us/corporations](http://www.secretary.state.nc.us/corporations).)

**24. Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) Data Reporting Requirement**

The Contractor shall complete and submit to the Division, the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) Data Reporting Requirement form within 10 State Business Days when awarded \$25,000 or more in federal funds.

**25. Salary Limitation**

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018, (Division H, Title II, Sec. 202), limits the salary amount that may be awarded and charged to ACF grants and cooperative agreements. Award funds issued under this announcement may not be used to pay the salary of an individual at a rate in excess of Executive Level II. The Executive Level II salary of the "Rates of Pay for the Executive Schedule" is \$189,600. This amount reflects an individual's base salary exclusive of fringe benefits and any income that an individual may be permitted to earn outside of the duties of the applicant organization. This salary limitation also applies to subawards and subcontracts under an ACF grant or cooperative agreement.

The Appropriations Act of 2017 (N.C. Session Law 2017-57), which was adopted by reference in 2019 budget legislation, SECTION 6.4 limits the State funds used for the annual salary of any individual employee of a nonprofit organization to \$120,000.

Per the statute *"No more than one hundred twenty thousand dollars (\$120,000) in State funds, including any interest earnings accruing from those funds, may be used for the annual salary of any individual employee of a nonprofit organization."*

- *The term "State funds" is defined by law in N.C.G.S. 143C-1-1(d)(25): Any moneys including federal funds deposited in the State treasury except moneys deposited in a trust fund or agency fund as described in G.S. 143C-1-3.*
- *HHSAR 331.101.70(b) Part 353: The salary rate limitation does not restrict the salary that an organization may pay an individual working under a Department of Health and Human Services contract or order; it merely limits the portion of that salary that may be paid with contract funds.*
- *The salary cap is for a 12-month period. That means that the cap amount is reduced for the 9-month academic period or 3 months contract period.*

- *The cap is for a 1.0 FTE. That means the cap is proportionally reduced for a .75 or .50 FTE.”*

**XI. APPLICATION CHECKLIST**

The following items must be included in the application. Please assemble the application in the following order in the format identified in Section VII on page 12:

- ☐ Application Checklist – Item 1
- ☐ Application Face Sheet – Item 2
- ☐ Proposal Summary/Design/Evaluation Plan – Item 3
- ☐ List of Subcontractors – Item 4
- ☐ Line-Item Budget & FTE Worksheet – Item 5
- ☐ Indirect Cost Rate Approval Letter (if applicable)
- ☐ Letters of Commitment or Statements of Support – Item 6
- ☐ IRS Tax Status Documentation – Item 7
  - a. IRS letter documenting your organization’s tax identification number
  - OR
  - b. IRS determination letter regarding your organization’s 501(c)(3) tax exempt status for private nonprofits